

Hector the Hot Water Bottle – How to use hot water bottles safely and know the correct first aid in the event of a contact burn or scald.

National Burns Awareness Day Campaign Toolkit

16 October 2024

Hector the Hot Water Bottle is a sensitive thing...

He needs a lot of care.

- ✓ Always ask an adult to help fill Hector.
- ✓ Never fill Hector with boiling hot water.
- ✓ Release the steam and make sure the top is nice and tight!

Scan the code to take a look and make sure you are aware!

SCAN ME

Bristol & Weston Hospitals Charity

South West Burn Care Operational Delivery Network

The South West Burn Care Network is a partnership of specialist adult and paediatric burn services based across University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust, Swannay Bay University Health Centre, North Bristol NHS Trust, Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust and University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust.

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1. Campaign overview

There are an estimated 10 million hot water bottles (HWB) currently used in the UK¹.

HWB related burn injuries represent a significant resource burden to UK burn services and can lead to life changing injuries and scarring requiring multiple hospital attendances.

An epidemiology study on HWB-related burn injuries showed a dramatic increase (43.4%) in HWB burns incidence on the health service during the year when there was a dramatic rise in fuel process.¹

This 'Hector the Hot Water Bottle' Campaign Toolkit can be used on National Burns Awareness Days and during the months between October and March when the majority of these types of injuries occur.

The aim of this campaign is to highlight the dangers of using a hot water bottle, how to use them safely and the correct first aid should someone receive a scald or contact burn.

The primary audience for the campaign is parents and carers that use hot water bottles for the children. The campaign is also relevant to young adults, adults and older adults who use hot water bottles.

The aim of the campaign is to reduce the number of people presenting to healthcare providers in primary, emergency and secondary care by:

- Increasing the knowledge around looking after hot water bottles
- Increasing the knowledge around the possible risks of using hot water bottles
- Increasing the knowledge around first aid for scalds and contact burns

We would recommend promoting this information annually by using our posters, social media images and the 'Hector the Hot Water Bottle' animation. This campaign toolkit can be used by Specialised Burn Services, NHS England, NHS Hospitals, NHS Integrated Care Systems, Primary Care Networks and VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliances. The resources will be available on the South West Burns Clinical Network website.

The Children's Burn Trust also has a National Burns Awareness Day toolkit that is updated each year (see Resources section).

2. Key messages

Below are the key campaign messages which help raise awareness of the main causes of injury due hot water bottle use and to encourage people who use hot water bottles to ensure the hot water bottle itself is in good order and is used safely.

- **Primary Messages**

- Ensure hot water bottles are less than two years old. As the hot water bottle standards do not dictate an expiry date it is recommended that hot water bottles are replaced every two years². Every hot water bottle should have a 'Daisy Wheel' showing the date of manufacture.
- Check there are no signs of damage, cracks or tears.
- Use boiled water from a kettle but wait at least 10 minutes to let it cool first before filling the hot water bottle.

- **Secondary Messages**

- Don't use hot tap water to fill the hot water bottle as it contains elements which can damage the rubber.
- Do not sit on or squeeze the hot water bottle.
- Before screwing the stopper back in, squeeze any remaining air out of the hot water bottle.
- Wrap the hot water bottle in a towel.

3. National Data

The following data was obtained from the International Burn Injury Database (iBID).

- Over the last 10 years, there have been 5,559 HWB burn injuries seen in a specialist burn service. Average approx. 10 cases a week nationally.
- Almost half of cases are children.
- The majority of these injuries occur in the most deprived areas (IMD 1, 2 and 3).
- The main living space where HWB injuries occur are in the kitchen or bedroom.

4. South West Data

- Over the last 10 years, there have been 256 HWB burn injuries seen in a specialist burn service. Average approx. 2 cases a month. The majority of these occurred in the bedroom whilst sleeping.
- 86 of these cases were under 14 years old. The majority of these occurred in the kitchen whilst playing/exploring.

5. Treatment/Outcomes

- Burn care is categorised by the level of care required based on a number of clinical factors, including size (%TBSA) and depth of burn injury, area of burn and if the airway/breathing has been compromised. The level of care is delivered in either a Burn Facility (minor burns), a Burn Unit (moderate burns) or a Burn Centre (major burns). Further information is available via: [National-Burn-Care-Referral-Guidance-2012.pdf \(britishburnassociation.org\)](#).

6. Social media

Please share the resources available below to help reduce the incidence of HWB burns and scalds on National Burns Awareness Day and during the winter months.

7. Copy to use in materials

Please see Appendix 1 for examples of copy that you could use when communicating with your audiences about this Hot Water Bottle campaign. This can be used across a range of channels, for example, websites, newsletters, posters in waiting areas, on public information screens in waiting areas.

8. Resources

- [Hector the Hot Water Bottle animation](#)
- Hector the Hot Water Bottle posters – https://www.southwest-burncare-network.nhs.uk/_common/getdocument?id=294970 and https://www.southwest-burncare-network.nhs.uk/_common/getdocument?id=294971
- 'My skin feel off when my hot water bottle burst over me' Patient Story on This Morning w/c 7.10.24 ['My Skin Fell Off When My Hot Water Bottle Burst Over Me' | This Morning - YouTube](#)
- The Children's Burn Trust National Burn Awareness Toolkit. [National Burn Awareness Day - Children's Burns Trust \(cbtrust.org.uk\)](#)
- Burns first aid and prevention (Newcastle Hospitals) [Burns First Aid and Prevention \(youtube.com\)](#)
- Burn First Aid for Parents (Safe Tea campaign) [Burn First Aid for Parents \(youtube.com\)](#)
- [How long should you keep a hot water bottle? Where to find its expiry date and safety warning ahead of winter \(inews.co.uk\)](#)
- [Hot Water Bottle Safety Guide – The Hot Water Bottle Company](#)
- [A Guide To Shopping For Safe Hot Water Bottles – The Hot Water Bottle Company \(thehotwaterbottleshop.com\)](#)

9. References

1. Chu H., Yarlagadda L. and Wearn C. Has the energy poverty crisis fuelled a rise in hot water bottle burn injuries within the United Kingdom? Burns. Sept 2024. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0305417924002961?via%3Dihub>
2. British Standards Institution (BSI) BS 1970:2022. Hot water bottles manufactured from rubber and PVC – Specification.

Appendix 1

Long form copy

Hector the Hot Water Bottle Campaign

- *Hector the Hot Water Bottle* animation provides some do's and don'ts around the safe use of hot water bottles.
- *The South West Burns Clinical Network, in association with the five specialised burn services, aim to highlight the dangers of using a hot water bottle, advice on safe use and advice on first aid.*
- The primary audience for the campaign is parents and carers that use hot water bottles for the children. The campaign is also relevant to older children, young adults, adults and older adults who use hot water bottles.
- Hot water bottle related burn injuries represent a significant resource burden to UK burn services and can lead to life changing injuries and scarring requiring multiple hospital attendances.
- The aim of the campaign is to reduce the number of people presenting to healthcare providers in primary, emergency and secondary care by:
 - Increasing the knowledge around looking after hot water bottles
 - Increasing the knowledge around the possible risks of using hot water bottles
 - Increasing the knowledge around first aid for scalds and contact burns

Primary messages:

- Ensure hot water bottles are less than two years old. As the hot water bottle standards do not dictate an expiry date it is recommended that hot water bottles are replaced every two years². Every hot water bottle should have a 'Daisy Wheel' showing the date of manufacture.
- Check there are no signs of damage, cracks or tears.
- Use boiled water from a kettle but wait at least 10 minutes to let it cool first before filling the hot water bottle.
- Do not overfill the hot water bottle – three quarters is enough – and let out any air above the water over a sink.
- Make sure the stopper is securely screwed on
- Do not sit on or squeeze the hot water bottle

Other resources:

- [Hector the Hot Water Bottle animation](#)
- Hector the Hot Water Bottle posters – <https://www.southwest-burncare-network.nhs.uk/common/getdocument?id=294970> and <https://www.southwest-burncare-network.nhs.uk/common/getdocument?id=294971>
- 'My skin feel off when my hot water bottle burst over me' Patient Story on This Morning w/c 7.10.24 ['My Skin Fell Off When My Hot Water Bottle Burst Over Me' | This Morning - YouTube](#)

- The Children’s Burn Trust National Burn Awareness Toolkit. [National Burn Awareness Day - Children's Burns Trust \(cbtrust.org.uk\)](https://www.cbtrust.org.uk)
- Burns first aid and prevention (Newcastle Hospitals) [Burns First Aid and Prevention \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- Burn First Aid for Parents (Safe Tea campaign) [Burn First Aid for Parents \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- [How long should you keep a hot water bottle? Where to find its expiry date and safety warning ahead of winter \(inews.co.uk\)](https://www.inews.co.uk)
- [Hot Water Bottle Safety Guide – The Hot Water Bottle Company](https://www.thehotwaterbottlecompany.com)
- [A Guide To Shopping For Safe Hot Water Bottles – The Hot Water Bottle Company \(thehotwaterbottlecompany.com\)](https://www.thehotwaterbottlecompany.com)

References:

1. Chu H., Yarlagadda L. and Wearn C. Has the energy poverty crisis fuelled a rise in hot water bottle burn injuries within the United Kingdom? Burns. Sept 2024. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0305417924002961?via%3Dihub>
2. British Standards Institution (BSI) BS 1970:2022. Hot water bottles manufactured from rubber and PVC – Specification.